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Implementation Path of Service-oriented Township Government Construction—The Perspective of Transformation of Government Functions

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Abstract

As development of economic globalization, building service-oriented government is an inevitable trend. This paper will discuss government functions transforming, township government and define the concept of service-oriented township government by drawing on new public service theory and public governance theory, and then expound present situation of building service - oriented government and finally put forward a path to build the service - oriented government.

Key words: Transformation of government functions; Service-oriented township government; Implementation path

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INTRODUCTION

The township government is at the grassroots level of the government work, and is closely related to the public.

It is an important executor of national policies, laws and regulations, and directly involves the vital interests of the public. Thus, the citizens can feel the quality of township government work and the level of service quality. Therefore, for the construction of China's service-oriented government, the building of service-oriented township government should be in the first place. From today's society, the main reason for the shortage of funds, a huge loss of population, the serious burden on farmers and other problems in the town lies in the fault or major problem made by township government at work. Based on the current opportunity of the transformation of government functions, the construction of service-oriented township government bears the brunt, so as to effectively solve many problems in the township government in the long term, and promote China's rapid completion of a service-oriented country.

1. DEFINITION OF CONCEPT

According to the research needs of this article, the concepts of transformation of government functions, the township government and service-oriented township government are defined, which is conducive to conduct exploration of related dimensions for the implementation path of service-oriented township government.

1.1 Transformation of Government Functions

In order to adapt to the economic development of globalization, China proposed the transformation of government functions in 1992. The so-called transformation of government functions refers to the transfer and changes of responsibilities as well as the functions, scope of role, content, and methods to be shouldered and played by state administrative organs in a given period according to the needs of national and social development. The Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of CPC put forward that the government functions must be transformed effectively,

which shows that the transformation of government functions is an important content of all round deepening reform and the administrative reform of government. The key words of the transformation of government functions are “rule of law” and “service”. The construction of a law-based government and service-oriented government is an important part of all round deepening reform, and the importance of the transformation of government functions is thus clear.

1.2 Township Government

In accordance with our Constitution, the township government is the most basic level of government unit in China, and the most basic administrative unit set in rural areas, towns and urban areas in certain area. “Township government, as the administrative organization set in the rural grassroots by national administrative system, is the basis for the operation of administrative system of the entire country. Various rural policies and tasks issued by the state must be implemented and executed through the township level of government, and township government is the output terminal of the state will in the rural community.” The township government, as China’s most basic unit of government, directly serves the majority of citizens, and is the government integrating the national, local and self interests.

1.3 Service-oriented Township Government

Zhu Guanglei believes that “the development conditions and environment of China has undergone tremendous changes, and the construction of service-oriented local government has become an inevitable choice of China’s social development at this stage.” The construction of service-oriented township government is different from that of service-oriented central government. The former is the subject of practice, and the latter is the theoretical guidance. The administrative behavior beneficial for the citizens is needed for the construction of service-oriented township government. The construction of service-oriented township government requires the township government to do something in practice, investigation, innovative administrative mode and other aspects. In the opinion of the author, the service-oriented township government is a concept with the administration by law as the fundamental premise and the people oriented as the core, so as to achieve the government administrative system with clear positioning of functions, high service efficiency and diver service objective.

2. THEORETICAL REFERENCE

Theory is the guidance of all behavior. The author referred the new public service theory and public governance theory to find theoretical basis for the analysis on the implementation path of the construction of service-oriented township government.

2.1 New Public Service Theory

The so-called public governance theory is a new public management theory emerged accompanied by the management crisis of western welfare states, the crisis in the mediation mechanism of market and hierarchy, the continuous development of civil society and the rapid growth of numerous social organizations. Its core point is the achievement of management of public affairs through the cooperation, negotiation, partnership, the determination of a common goal and other ways (Gu, 2009). Its main content includes that the public governance is a public action system consisting of diverse public management subjects, and a kind of autonomous and self-government network management for the cooperation of diverse public management subjects on the basis of partnership. Moreover, there is power-dependent and interactive partnership among diverse public management subjects (Li, 2005). As the latest development of public administration theory and an emerging paradigm of public management theory, the public governance theory not only has played an important guide role in the process of governance reform in some countries and regions, but also is bound to produce a profound impact on the collective decision-making and public events of human society. The public governance theory has a strong reference significance to the construction of China’s construction of service-oriented government, which not only puts forward a new governance mechanism – social mechanism, but also provides inspiration for the “people-oriented” management style of the government.

2.2 Public Governance Theory

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to the construction of China's construction of service-oriented government, which not only puts forward a new governance mechanism – social mechanism, but also provides inspiration for the “people-oriented” management style of the government.

3. STATUS ANALYSIS ON CHINA'S CONSTRUCTION OF SERVICE-ORIENTED TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT

The introduction to the status of the construction of service-oriented township government helps analyze the problems in the process of building the service-oriented township government. The status of the construction of service-oriented township government can be better understood through the analysis on the overall situation and specific classification of the construction of service-oriented township government.

3.1 Overall Condition of the Construction of Service-oriented Township Government

The construction of service-oriented township government is historically inevitable. Looking back at history, it is not difficult to find that before the reform and opening up, the functions of township government were ubiquitous, and township government was versatile; but with the advance of reform and opening up as well as the development of market economy, the development of township government became the government administration system with the core of pursuing GDP; along with the continuous emergence of social problems, the township government faced new challenges, and the constant exacerbation of serious official standard thought and other problems, which required the township government to transfer its function focus to the public service, therefore the construction of service-oriented township government has become inevitable.

After entering the twenty-first century, the construction of service-oriented township government stepped to its initial stage, and all parties took certain measures to build the service-oriented township government, which also resulted in some success. In order to speed up urbanization building, the township government broke the urban-rural dual structure to promote the coordinated development between the urban and rural areas; in order to optimize the personal allocation of township government, a number of organizations were streamlined to promote the work efficiency of township government; in order to optimize the system and mechanism operating conditions of township government, a series of measures including the optimization of resource allocation, the adjustment of performance assessment mechanism and so forth, which led to more obvious results.

3.2 Type of Construction of Service-oriented Township Government

In this section, three main types of the construction of service-oriented township government including

the organization streamlining type, innovative service type and limited empowerment type, which is further conducive to propose the implementation path of service-oriented township government construction.

3.2.1 Organization Streamlining Type

In the early twentieth century, pilot works of rural tax and fee reform were carried out in Anhui and other places in China, and then this reform was implemented in various towns all over the country. This reform focuses on streamlining the organ establishment and the staff, so as to reduce the burden on the finance and farmers and consolidate the achievement of rural tax and fee reform. The exploration of organizational structure and its operating mechanism in line with the characteristics of the township government work can mainly be implemented by following methods: first, set party and government organs comprehensively, and implement a post with multiple functions; secondly, set the limitation for township establishment in accordance with the population size, economic development, financial security status and so forth; finally, regulate the number of cadres of the township government and expand the cross-representation of each township cadre, thus improving the work efficiency and reducing the financial burden.

Other towns also carried out corresponding organ streamlining, for example, township office of Hubei streamlined from five to three offices; various towns of Zhejiang set five offices: comprehensive office of party and government, economic development office, social affairs management offices and so on; a town of Heilongjiang Province did not set any organs, but only a dozen posts: the secretary of party committee, organization secretary, civil administration assistant and so on. Township government in all regions streamlined their organs in varying degrees in order to improve the work efficiency of township government, but they have been impossible to escape the vicious circle of “streamlining–expansion–re-streamlining–re-expansion”.

3.2.2 Innovative Service Type

In the process of building service-oriented township government in Chongqing, the construction is mainly positioned in the innovative service mode, which can be implemented by following aspects: first, establish various “service centers”, “one-stop service”, “service agent system”, service hot-line and other measures to facilitate the masses; secondly, strengthen the concept of administration by law of rural cadres, regulate the administrative acts of township government to make township government perform duties in accordance with statutory authority and procedures; and finally, regulate the work assessment mechanism for township government, and mainly focus on serving the people. For example, Xingyi Town, Fengdu County of Chongqing set up various types of “rural service centers”, and Yang Xiaohong, a big breeder of Changsha Village in this town said “if it were not the township government who helped

me repair the water diversion ditches, and the staff in rural service center who regularly provided me free technical guidance to solve a lot of production and marketing problems, how can I raise 100 beef bulls?"¹

3.2.3 Limited Empowerment Type

The implementation of limited empowerment originated from the "Decision of Chongqing People's Government on the Reform of Township Law-enforcement Supervision and Strengthening of Public Service Pilot Work" issued by Chongqing government in 2006, in which, in terms of the construction of service-oriented township government, the limited empowerment is mainly positioned in that giving part of the powers to competent and responsible citizens and businesses to increase the degree of public participation. The following paths can be used to achieve this: first, with regard to the reform of "public service and products", use the attitude of "focusing on the situation, issues or behavior instead of the person" to let the market and the public participate in the reform, do not directly provide public services and products to government, but give limited empowerment to the market and the public with the "entrusted operation", "open tendering", "contract" and other ways, so as to further increase the work efficiency and quality of government; secondly, the system reform of "concentrated consultation" mainly refers to the selection of citizens with strong working ability and sense of responsibility to bear the "concentrated consultation" work to answer farmers' policies, laws and other questions under the premise of not increasing organs and personnel, so as to increase citizens' enthusiasm in participation; and finally, in terms of the reform of "contract management", in the process of citizens and businesses participating in the township government work, legally bidding contract shall be signed for "concentrated consultation", entrusted operation and so forth, so as to define the rights and obligations of government and citizens and protect the legitimate rights and interests of both parties.

4. IMPLEMENTATION PATH OF SERVICE-ORIENTED TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT CONSTRUCTION UNDER THE PERSPECTIVE OF GOVERNMENT FUNCTION TRANSFORMATION

Combined with the report of the 18th CPC National Congress and the third plenary session of the 18th central committee of CPC, the new public service theory and public governance theory is used to specifically explore the implementation path of service-oriented township

government construction under the perspective of government function transformation.

4.1 Accurately Grasp the Functions of Service-oriented Township Government

Township government, as the basic level of administrative unit, will inevitably arises problems of lagging transformation of government functions, which requires the township government to re-examine and accurately grasp its role in the social life. The specific and reasonable positioning of township government functions has a decisive role in the organ streamlining of township government and the reasonable supply of public products and services; under the background of the socialist market economy, the government is required to streamline administration and delegate power to lower levels, and then exit markets to let the market play a decisive role in resource allocation.

Based on the new public management, new public service and public governance theory, with the social and economic development, the township government should play a "service" role instead of "leading" role to build the service-oriented township government, and ultimately achieve the people oriented and shared governance. At present, a lot of township governments still regard the economic development as the primary responsibility and the GDP as the criteria of performance evaluation, and forget about the "people oriented". Therefore, under the perspective of the transformation of government functions, the effective change of township government functions should stand in the breach, and only the dislocation, exceeding-duty and absence problem are solved, the purpose of organ streamlining can be realized to stimulate the vitality of government, and hand over affairs not belonging to the government to the market.

4.2 Effectively Improve the Township Government's Ability of Administration by Law

As the saying goes, "No rulers, no standards". Based on the transformation of township government functions, the administration by law becomes an inevitable trend. On the one hand, the township government must administrate by law, strengthen the concept of rule of law of government officers, and effectively follow the statutory authority and procedures in exercising powers and fulfill responsibilities, and then standardize and legalize various matters of township government. On the other hand, the more important for the township government is to foster the concept of rule of law of citizens, strengthen the legal sense of citizens to allow citizens to safeguard their own interests, and cultivate the citizens' ability to know, understand and abide by the law, so as to create a social foundation of legal town fundamentally.

¹ Data source: <http://gx.people.com.cn/>

4.3 Remodel the Performance Assessment Mechanism of “People-oriented” Township Government

To build the service-oriented township government, the “people-oriented” and public service-dominant performance assessment system must be established: (1) improve the public participation of citizens, so that citizens can become the real object of selection, supervision and assessment of the township government

officers; (2) set new indicator system with the public service quality as the core, supplemented by the economic and social management and other indicators, so as to thoroughly solve the GDP-dominant performance assessment criteria, so that township government can be immersed in the public service. Now experience is learned to build the “people-oriented” assessment mechanism of township government:

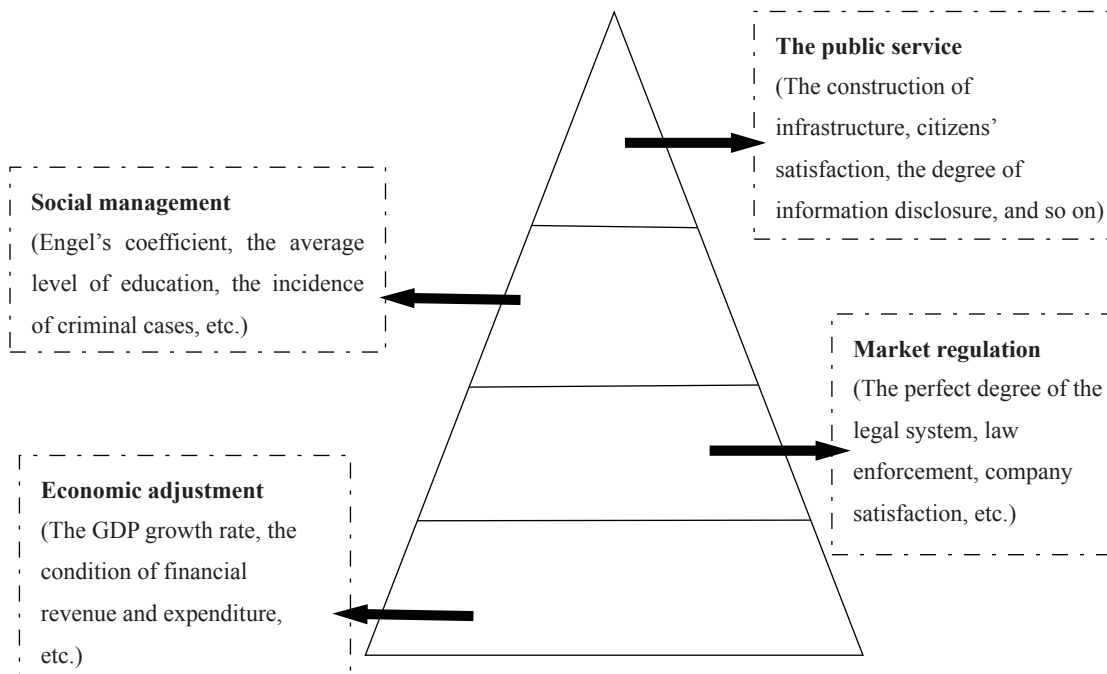


Figure 1
The Township Government Examination of People-based Mechanisms (Pyramid)

Naming the assessment mechanism as the “pyramid” is mainly to highlight the importance of public services, and taking the citizen satisfaction as the first standard for the assessment of township government improves the citizenship status in the construction of service-oriented township government. This assessment mechanism ensures the participation of businesses and citizens, and makes up the insufficiency of the assessment criteria of GDP on the basis of diversified assessment, thus increasing the effectiveness and credibility of assessment results.

4.4 Constantly Innovate the Realization Approach of E-government Affairs in Town

The e-government affairs in town are closely linked to the working and living of citizens, and are the foundation to speed up the information construction. It is the extension of traditional e-government affairs in the town. In March, 2008, the “Some Suggestions of CPC Central Committee on Strengthening the Agricultural Infrastructure and Further Promoting Agricultural Development and Farmers’ Income” (the central first document in 2008) proposed to actively promote the rural informatization,

which is a problem emphasized in four consecutive years by the central first document. E-government affairs in town directly face the local citizens, and is one of the main way to provide services for the public in the global informatization age, so it must be close to the public needs, and serve the public well. Through the e-government affairs, the linkage between the government and citizens is promoted, and the administrative efficiency and service level of township government is enhanced, thus nipping the social skills and contradictions in the bud.

4.5 Establish Network Collaborative Mechanism

The establishment of network collaborative mechanism is mainly to deal with the relationship among the governments as well as among the government, market and citizens. Without coordinated government relation, quality services for citizens cannot be provided, and decentralization, administrative examination and so forth are unable to be achieved; the lack of collaborative mechanism may cause repetition and overlapping of government functions. The collaborative mechanism between the higher levels of government and township

government shall be really achieved, power shall be decentralized to those who should be responsible for, and power need to be divided clearly; the cooperation mechanism among the township government shall be coordinated to link with the work of higher levels of government; when carrying out projects that need the participation of businesses such as government procurement, the power shall be actively decentralized to the business, so that the market can play a decisive role in the resource allocation; when the township government wants to make decisions with great impact on the economic and social development of the its jurisdiction, it must fully carry forward the spirit of democracy, so that a variety of different views and interests can be expressed objectively to the fullest; the township government needs to build extensive public participation system, and listen to opinions of the public from all areas and all sectors through the hearings, request for comments and other means. The township government shall make collective decisions on the basis of investigation and full argument.

CONCLUSIONS

The construction of service-oriented township government under the perspective of the transformation of government functions shall build a closed system containing the township government, the superior government, businesses and citizens to analyze the implementation path of the service-oriented township government construction through five dimensions. By analyzing the status of service-oriented township government, the author believe that the implementation path should be the accurate positioning of functions of service-oriented township government, effective improvement of the ability of township government to administrate by law, the establishment of the performance assessment mechanism for “people-oriented” township government, the realization approach of constant innovative e-government affairs in town and the establishment of network collaborative mechanism, so as to realize the vision of service-oriented township government construction on schedule.

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